2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

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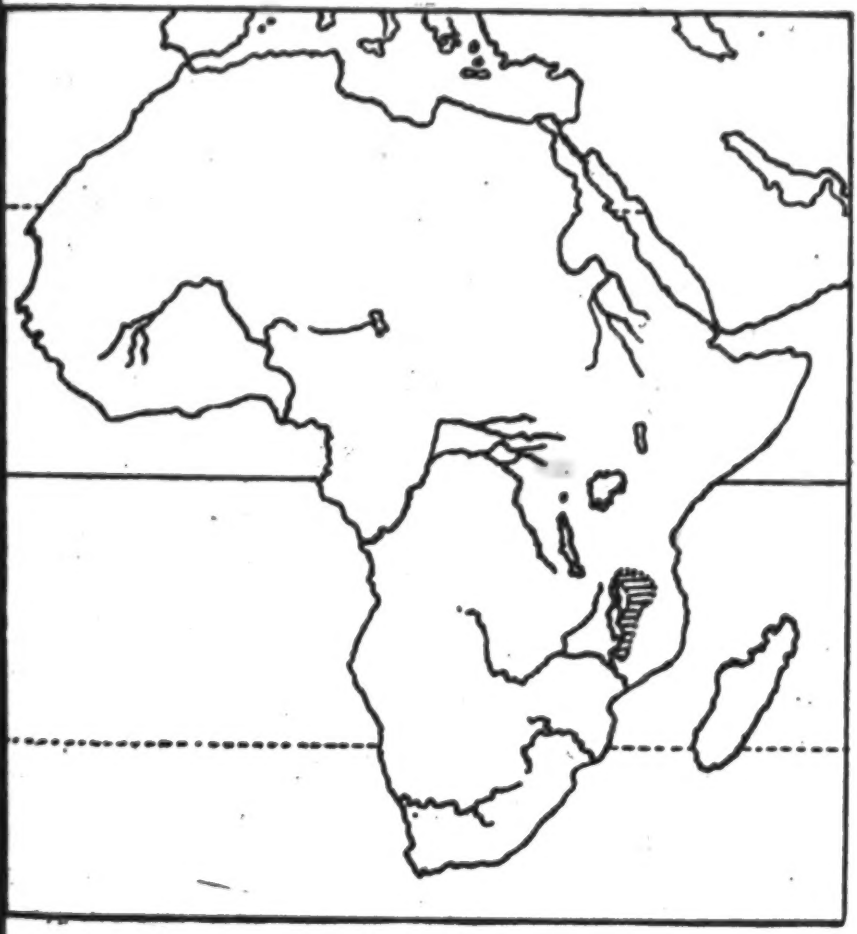
[10a]



MAP I. AFRICA.
The shaded portion shows roughly where the Yao live.

human habitation. Large areas around Lake Shirwa are in fact marshlands in the wet season, and stretches of poor sandy and slightly saline soil during the dry season.

Generally speaking the distribution of surface water throughout this area is variable. The highlands are on the whole well supplied with streams which rise in the mountains and flow

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2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

133 312 swiftly throughout the year. In the plains many small rivers flow quite strongly during the rainy season but dry up shortly afterwards and by July or August the water shortage becomes acute for many villages. In the rainy season plenty of shallow pools supply the wants of the people ; as these dry up the women must go farther and farther afield to find water. To the east of the watershed of the plain the distance they may have to go is still within the bounds of possibility, but on the valley lip this is no longer so,[1] and large areas of the escarpment, especially to the south towards the Shire Highlands, are unpopulated. The Administration has been sinking wells in an attempt to increase the amount of land available for human habitation. It reports that soon after wells had been sunk villages moved there and started gardens : [2] this indicates the pressure of the population on 134 the land. Within the area where most of my study was made, i.e. from the northern fringe of the Shire Highlands, agriculturalists describe the soil as ' variable '. The Agricultural Officer at Zomba, writing of this area, said :

> In the valley of the Shire the soils may be described as rich sandy alluvium. Around the hills the soil is chiefly red with a high percentage of clay and a small percentage of sand. Much of the soil in the ridge of highland stretching from the Chikala hills in the south to the hills near Mount Mangoche in the north is sandy and poor, with pockets of good rich soil here and there. The soil improves as the land slopes down each side of the ridge to the west to the Shire Valley, and to the east to the shores of Lake Shirwa and Lake Chiuta.[3]

Climate

132 The climate is the tropical monsoon type. The average annual rainfall over the years 1944–6 at the three stations, Jalasi, Nyambi and Mlomba, i.e. placed at even intervals throughout the area of study, was 41·89 inches.[4] The rainfall is slightly heavier in the higher areas. This rain falls almost entirely during the

[1] The relation of water supply to population distribution in Nyasaland is discussed by Dixey, F., ' The Distribution of the Population of Nyasaland ', *Geographical Review*, xviii (April 1928), 274 ff.

[2] *Nyasaland Protectorate Report on Native Affairs* (Zomba, 1931), 47.

[3] *Report of the Agricultural Officer, Zomba, to the Director of Agriculture* (1944), (unpublished).

[4] I am indebted to the Agricultural Officer, Fort Johnston, for this information.